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Anti-Cigarette 'Commercials'

The need for frank and intensified public education about the dangers of cigarette smoking has been pressed by no fewer than three Federal agencies—the Public Health Service, Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission. These, in turn, have been carrying out the mandate Congress gave in the Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act.

The United States Court of Appeals in Washington has now upheld the requirement by the F.C.C. that a station carrying cigarette commercials provide "a

significant amount of time for the other viewpoint." In varying degrees, radio and TV stations have been running "commercials" from cancer and heart organizations for over a year—and these have been seen and heard regularly in the same forum where the blandishments to smoke cigarettes are strongest. One New York station yesterday began an unusual series of public service programs to teach smokers how to quit.

The District of Columbia judges upheld the F.C.C. ruling out of a belief that the volume of cigarette advertising made "existing sources" inadequate to inform the public of the nature and extent of the danger from cigarette smoking.

The F.C.C. had based its ruling on the "fairness doctrine" which is at the heart of licensed broadcasting. The tobacco companies and broadcasters are expected to appeal to the Supreme Court, which already has under consideration related issues on the F.C.C.'s authority. This much is certain: Federal agencies must not take any steps backward in telling the American public about hazards to its health.

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